



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

March 10, 2006

# News Release

## **ICE and Dallas PD arrest 44 gang members & associates during two-week national enforcement action**

*Action is latest under Operation Community Shield, which has yielded 149 Dallas gang arrests in first year*

DALLAS — Federal agents with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office here, in partnership with the Dallas Police Department (DPD), arrested 44 street gang members during a two-week national enforcement action that culminated yesterday.

These arrests were the latest under the auspices of “Operation Community Shield,” a comprehensive ongoing initiative launched by ICE roughly one year ago to disrupt and dismantle transnational, violent street gangs in the United States. Operation Community Shield represents the first time the federal government has used immigration and customs authorities in a combined, national campaign against street gangs.

Over the past year, ICE has conducted several targeted enforcement actions under Operation Community Shield, including the recent one. In the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, 149 gang members were arrested during the first year of this ongoing initiative. Nationally, these efforts have resulted in the arrest of 2,388 members of 239 different gangs. Roughly 51 of the individuals were gang leaders. Approximately 922 of those arrested were from the violent street gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Those arrested under Operation Community Shield are either prosecuted criminally or removed from the country through immigration proceedings.

The latest enforcement action began Feb. 24 and continued until yesterday. The ICE office in Dallas teamed up with the Dallas Police Department and its other law enforcement partners to target gang members. In addition to DPD, the other local law enforcement partners that assisted with these arrests included: the FBI; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Department of Public Safety; and the Lewisville, Texas, Police Department. In addition to the 44 gang members arrested in Dallas-Fort Worth, ICE offices nationally conducted other arrests throughout the United States, including: San Diego (41), Washington D.C. (22), Miami (22), and Raleigh, N.C. (19). Gang members were also arrested in locations such as Sioux Falls, S.D.; Des Moines, Iowa; and Springfield, Mo.

Those arrested in Dallas-Fort Worth during this latest action included members of the following street gangs: MS-13, Varrio Northside (VNS), Folk Nation, Fat City Bloods, SUR 13, and Eastside Homeboys. Other members from around the United States came from gangs, such as: Sureños, 18<sup>th</sup> Street Gang, Latin Kings, Vatos Locos, Bloods, Crips, Armenian Power, Street Thug Criminals, Brown Pride, Asian Dragon Family, Big Time Killers, Avenue Assassins, Spanish Gangster Disciples and Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos.

“Our ICE agents and officers, the Dallas Police Department, and our many other local law enforcement agencies have been exceptionally successful in removing violent street gang members from our communities,” said John Chakwin Jr., special agent-in-charge of the Dallas ICE Office of Investigations. “With these partnerships, and using ICE’s unique immigration and customs law enforcement authorities, we’re able to remove criminal street gang members from the United States, and shut down the gang financially.”

More than 260 of the 375 individuals arrested in the two-week national operation have past criminal records, most of them violent. Six of those arrested were gang leaders. Furthermore, ICE agents arrested 73 of the individuals on new criminal charges that range from drug violations, to firearms violations, to charges of re-entering the country after deportation. The remaining individuals are charged with administrative immigration violations and have been placed into deportation proceedings. Some of those arrested locally over the past two weeks include:

- Joel Faustino, 23, Mexico—arrested Feb. 13. He and his brother Juan have outstanding warrants in Fairfax, Va., for malicious wounding of an individual with a pipe. Member of MS-13.
- Jesus Mario Garcia-Chavez, 22, Mexico—arrested Feb. 26. Re-entered the U.S. after having been deported. Member of Varrio Northside gang.
- David Efren Palacios-Yanez, 23, Previously deported as an aggravated felon. Member of Varrio Northside gang. U.S. Attorney accepted his case for prosecution for Re-entry after deportation, a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison.
- Jose Wilberto Urrutia, 31, El Salvador—arrested Feb. 26. Re-entered the U.S. after having been deported. Member of MS-13 gang.
- Cesar Ramirez, 19, Mexico—arrested March 2 on an outstanding felony warrant. Member of Varrio Northside gang.

### **Partnerships with law enforcement**

Law enforcement partnerships are critical to the success of Operation Community Shield. Collaboration in the Dallas area in recent days was representative of efforts played out across the country. ICE agents received data from the Dallas Police Department about violent gang members in the area. ICE then conducted further investigation to determine if any of these suspects were subject to arrest for federal customs or immigration violations. After identifying targets subject to ICE authorities, ICE collaborated with Dallas police and jointly conducted a local operation that led to arresting 44 street gang members and associates.

### **About Operation Community Shield**

Operation Community Shield was launched in February 2005 after a threat assessment by all ICE field offices identified MS-13 as one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. The assessment found that most gang members were foreign-born, in the United States illegally, had prior criminal convictions, and/or were involved in crimes that made them subject to ICE's broad immigration and customs authorities.

ICE kicked off Operation Community Shield with an enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of more than 100 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents nationwide joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members.

Thus far, ICE agents from 76 field offices, working with law enforcement agencies nationwide, have arrested a total of 2,388 suspected street gang members and associates. These apprehensions include 533 criminal arrests and 1,855 administrative arrests. More than 1,075 of these suspects have violent criminal histories. As part of the operation, ICE agents have also seized roughly 117 firearms.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*